

Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home

HOME AND GARDEN PESTICIDES

by Elaine Andrews

GENERAL INFORMATION

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill or repel pests. Pesticides include many common household products which you may not consider particularly hazardous, such as disinfectants and flea collars. Examples of pesticides include:

- Herbicides, which kill plants,
- Insecticides, which kill insects,
- Fungicides, which kill fungus or mold,
- Rat poisons, which kill rats, and
- Disinfectants, which kill bacteria.

All home and garden pesticides are toxic or poisonous to some degree. In many areas residents are not permitted to dispose of poisonous substances down the home drain or into the storm sewer and are strongly discouraged from throwing them away. Pesticides are not appropriate for septic system disposal. All products included on this fact sheet pose a health hazard if misused and a long-term hazard to drinking water quality if improperly disposed.

This publication covers disposal of the following: general-use pesticides; disinfectants; mothballs and flakes; no-pest strips; pet collars, powders, and shampoos; and wood preservatives.

If you have questions about disposal of specific home and garden products not described in this fact sheet, please call your local or county public health or solid waste department. For alternatives to pesticide usage, contact your county extension agent.

PLEASE NOTE: In view of rapidly changing information about the toxicity of hazardous substances, readers are cautioned to take personal responsibility for following the guidelines in this brochure. If you need additional advice, contact your county extension office or your district DNR office hazardous waste section.

Pesticide Use Categories

Pesticides are classified for "general use" or "restricted use" by the EPA according to provisions in the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). These classifications have been developed to protect people and the environment from inappropriate use of pesticides. Pesticides that are classified as "general use" are relatively safe both for the user and the environment. Pesticides classified as "restricted use" include two groups of pesticides: those which have been banned from use and those which require special training and certification by the user.

However, pesticide ratings change. If you have old pesticides around the home, they may now be restricted or banned depending on product content. For example, products containing DDT, 2,4,5-T, silvex, and those with high percentages of arsenic and strychnine have been banned. If you have pesticides on hand that are more than 5 years old, check with your county agriculture extension agent for information on their current classification.

General-Use Pesticides

General-use pesticides include rose dust, flea powder, home insect sprays, insect and rodent traps, and weed killers. Anyone can apply general-use pesticides relatively safely if they follow the label instructions carefully and observe safety precautions. All pesticide labels include special signal words such as "CAUTION,"

“WARNING” or “DANGER,” on the label to warn you about the hazards of using that product.

General-use pesticides are products which are *currently* available to the general public at hardware, grocery, garden and other community stores.

Restricted-Use Pesticides

Only *certified applicators* can purchase and apply pesticides in this category. Products containing these pesticides should not be in the home. Recently manufactured products containing these pesticides include a label warning, “Restricted-Use Pesticide.” However, you may have pesticides in storage that have had one or more of their uses cancelled or regulated and are now classified as restricted-use pesticides. Some pesticides which have been reclassified from general-use to restricted-use as of July 1988 include certain farm herbicides such as those found in Bladex and Lasso and all corn rootworm insecticides.

Check with your county agriculture extension agent for information on the proper classification of your pesticides.

Banned Pesticides

Technically, these pesticides fall into the restricted-use category. However, *all* uses of pesticides in this group have been cancelled according to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, FIFRA. You won't find these pesticides in recently produced home products, but they may be present in the home if you have old products or products manufactured for commercial use.

Chlordane, DDT, ethyl dibromide (EDB), 2,4,5-T and silvex are common examples of banned pesticides. In particular, check old dandelion and weed killer products for banned 2,4,5-T and silvex ingredients.

DISPOSING OF HOME AND GARDEN PESTICIDES

Disinfectants

Disposal technique depends on the main ingredient. Read the label.

Old home products: Products labelled “germ proofing” or “germ proofs” or products with chlorophenol ingredients should be carefully packaged in plastic and saved for a household hazardous waste collection program.

Recently purchased home disinfectants: Share with a neighbor, friend or civic group. If the product is a bathroom cleaner, it can be flushed down the drain with plenty of water. Evaporate if an organic solvent is present.

Common solvents are:

- carbon tetrachloride (old products)
- chlorinated solvents
- methylene chloride
- mineral spirits
- petroleum distillates
- toluene
- trichloroethane

Industrial strength disinfectants: Share or package and save for a household hazardous waste collection program.

Mothballs and Flakes

Share or evaporate if practical.

Small quantities of mothballs can be evaporated in the open air in a secure place away from children or pets. If these disposal options are not possible, wrap in plastic and save for a household hazardous waste collection program.

No-Pest Strips

Use up, share, or wrap and save for a household hazardous waste collection program.

Buy in small quantities as necessary. Used strips can be wrapped in newspaper and disposed of in municipal garbage collection.

Pesticide Containers

Triple rinse empty glass, plastic or metal pesticide *containers* before disposal. Add the rinse water to your spray mixture and apply it to needed sites. Carefully wrap empty paper or foil containers to protect sanitary landfill workers. Dispose of rinsed or wrapped containers in the trash.

Pesticides for General Use

Use up or share.

To share general-use pesticides, they should be recently purchased and in their original containers with legible labels. Containers should be at least one-third full.

Liquid pesticides which have separated over the winter can still be used by remixing the product before using.

Dispose of leftover general-use pesticides by using them or sharing them with someone who can use the product. If you can not use them up this way, follow the recommended storage procedures. Take them to a household hazardous waste collection program if the community announces one or contact your district DNR office to learn if a collection program has been announced for a community near you.

Waste Pesticide Storage Procedures:

- Wrap carefully in newspaper and a plastic bag or plastic container
- Label any new outside container
- Store in a safe place away from children or pets

Pet Collars, Powders and Shampoos

Use up, share, or wrap and save for a household hazardous waste collection program.

To avoid excess, buy in small quantities as necessary. Used or empty products can be wrapped in newspaper and disposed in municipal garbage collection.

Restricted or Banned Pesticides

Because of their restricted-use classification, do not use or share these pesticides. Instead, package them and save for a household hazardous waste collection program. Refer to the waste pesticide storage procedures listed in the box.

Wood Preservatives

Wood preservatives are chemicals used to kill or repel the pests which cause wood decay and therefore are technically classified as pesticides.

Depending on product description, follow advice below. Read label to verify main ingredient.

Metal-based (such as copper or zinc naphthenate): Use up, share with a neighbor or save for household hazardous waste collection program.

Human and environmental impact of these preservatives is not fully understood but the product should be treated as a pesticide, in other words, as a hazard to human and environmental health.

Pentachlorophenol (PCP or penta): Do not use. Avoid all exposure. Do not attempt to dispose.

PCP presents severe human and environmental health hazards. At present there is no acceptable means of disposal. If you have some of this product, package it carefully to prevent spills and save for an EPA-sponsored PCP collection program.

NOTE ABOUT PESTICIDES CONTAMINATED WITH DIOXIN Pesticides containing silvex or 2,4,5-T and wood preservatives containing pentachlorophenol are contaminated with a form of dioxin. This form of dioxin is a suspected cause of some cancers and birth defects. If you have any of these products, please call your local health department and ask them to add your name to a disposal notification list. Package carefully and label. Store until notified of proper disposal procedure.

More Information: Related Publications from the University of Wisconsin-Extension

G3454, *Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Paint and Other Home Improvement Products*

G3455, *Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Solvents and Home Cleaning Products*

G3456, *Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Waste Oil and Other Automotive Products*

G3026, *Chemical Hazards in the Home: Pesticides*

G3027, *Chemical Hazards in the Home: Solvents*

G3028, *Chemical Hazards in the Home: Household Cleaners and Polishes*

Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Product Disposal Guide, DNR WW-003 86Rev, available from the Environmental Resources Center (608-262-0020) or a DNR District Office.

Making the Switch—Alternatives to Using Toxic Chemicals in the Home, is available for \$5 from the Local Government Commission, 909 12th Street, Suite 203, Sacramento CA 95814, (916) 448-1198.

DISPOSAL RECOMMENDATIONS in this brochure are based on household product content descriptions listed in the report *Toxicants in Consumer Products* by Susan Ridgely, funded by an EPA grant and published by the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle, August 1982 and on EPA household waste hazard class listings found in *A Survey of Household Hazardous Waste and Related Collection Programs*, EPA/530-SW-86-038.



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